PLATO: REPUBLIC (in translation)

This paper contains twelve questions.

You must answer THREE questions, of which QUESTION 12 must be one.

Mark scheme: 33.3% of overall mark for each question.
1. Is Thrasymachus refuted by the end of Book I?
2. According to the Republic, should we ever lie? If so, why and in what circumstances? If not, why not?
3. Does Socrates’ account of justice succeed in answering Glaucon’s and Adeimantus’ challenge?
4. ‘No tutor would accept from a pupil the reasons given by Plato for … the doctrine that the Soul is tripartite.’ (GILBERT RYLE) Discuss.
5. Why does Socrates think that ‘cities will have no rest from evils’ (473d) until philosophers become rulers or rulers become philosophers? Is he right?
6. Are Socrates’ arguments for the distinction between knowledge (episteme) and belief (doxa) sound? Is the distinction he draws philosophically tenable?
7. What has the form of the Good to do with knowledge?
8. Will philosophers return to the Cave to rule? Are we given good reasons for why they should return?
9. Why is the life of the tyrant the most unhappy life? Are Socrates’ arguments convincing?
10. Does the Republic’s attack on the arts misconceive the point of poetic and artistic activity?
11. ‘Book 10 itself appears gratuitous and clumsy, and is full of oddities; […] a lame and messy ending [to the Republic].’ (ANNAS). Assess these claims with reference to the final section of book X, the myth of Er.

12. Comment briefly on FOUR of the following six passages:

(a) A fine sentiment, Cephalus, but, speaking of this very thing itself, namely, justice, are we to say unconditionally that it is speaking the truth and paying whatever debts one has incurred? Or is doing these thing sometimes just and sometimes unjust? I mean this sort of thing, for example: Everyone would surely agree that if a sane man lends weapons to a friend and then asks for them back when he is out of his mind, the friend shouldn’t return them, and wouldn’t be acting justly if he did. Nor should
anyone be willing to tell the whole truth to someone who is out of his mind.

That’s true.

Then the definition of justice isn’t speaking the truth and repaying what one has borrowed.

(Book 1, 331c1-d3)

(b) We’re bravely, but in a quarrelsome and merely verbal fashion, pursuing the principle that natures that aren’t the same must follow different ways of life. But when we assigned different ways of life to different natures and the same ones to the same, we didn’t at all examine the form of natural difference and sameness we had in mind or in what regard we were distinguishing them.

No, we didn’t look into that.

Therefore, we might just as well, it seems, ask ourselves whether the natures of bald and long-haired men are the same or opposite. And, when we agree that they are opposite, then, if the bald ones are cobblers, we ought to forbid the long-haired ones to be cobblers, and if the long-haired ones are cobblers, we ought to forbid this to the bald ones.

(Book 5, 454b4-c5)

(c) Consider, then, what being released from their bonds and cured of their ignorance would naturally be like if something like this came to pass. When one of them was freed and suddenly compelled to stand up, turn his head, and walk, and look up toward the light, he’d be pained and dazzled and unable to see the things whose shadows he’d seen before. What do you think he’d say, if we told him that what he’d seen before was inconsequential, but that now – because he is a bit closer to the things that are and is turned towards things that are more – he sees more correctly? Or, to put it another way, if we pointed to each of the things passing by, asked him what each of them is, and compelled him to answer, don’t you think he’d be at a loss and that he’d believe that the things he saw earlier were truer than the ones he was now being shown?
(d) Now, it looks as though the other so-called virtues of the soul are akin to those of the body, for they really aren’t there beforehand but are added later by habit and practice. However, the virtue of reason seems to belong above all to something more divine, which never loses its power, but is either useful and beneficial or useless and harmful, depending on the way it is turned. Or have you never noticed this about people who are said to be vicious but clever, how keen the vision of their little souls is and how sharply it distinguishes the things it is turned towards? This shows that its sight isn’t inferior but rather is forced to serve evil ends, so that the sharper it sees, the more evil it accomplishes.

(Book 7, 515c4-d7)

(e) The investigation we’re undertaking is not an easy one but requires keen eyesight. Therefore, since we aren’t clever people, we should adopt the method of investigation that we’d use if, lacking keen eyesight, we were told to read small letters from a distance and then noticed that the same letters existed elsewhere in a larger size and on a larger surface. We’d consider it a godsend, I think, to be allowed to read the larger ones first and then to examine the smaller ones, to see whether they are really the same.

That’s certainly true, said Adeimantus, but how is this case similar to our investigation of justice?

I’ll tell you. We say, don’t we, that there is the justice of a single man and also the justice of a whole city?

Certainly.

(Book 2, 368c-e)

(f) Well, then, let’s try to explain how timocracy emerges from aristocracy. Or is it a simple principle that the cause of change in any constitution is civil war breaking out within the ruling group itself, but that if this group – however small it is – remains of
one mind, the constitution cannot be changed?

Yes, that’s right.

How, then, Glaucon, will our city be changed? How will civil war arise, either between the auxiliaries and the rulers or within either group?

(Book 8, 545c8-d7)